

**LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN
AIRMAN: BEING THE WAR
RECORD OF CAPT. HAMILTON
COOLIDGE, U.S.A., 1917-1918**

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Letters of an American Airman: Being the War Record of Capt. Hamilton Coolidge, U.S.A.,
1917-1918 by Hamilton Coolidge

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HAMILTON COOLIDGE

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LETTERS OF AN
AMERICAN AIRMAN



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BEING THE WAR RECORD OF
CAPT. HAMILTON COOLIDGE, U.S.A.
1917-1918



BOSTON
PRIVATELY PRINTED

1919

HAMILTON COOLIDGE

- Born in Brookline, September 1, 1895.
Entered Groton School, September, 1908.
Senior Prefect, captain of the football eleven, and pitcher on the baseball nine, 1914-1915.
Graduated from Groton, June, 1915.
At Plattsburg training camp, Summer of 1915.
Entered Harvard (Class of '19), September, 1915.
Vice-president of the Freshman Class.
On the Freshman football and baseball teams.
At Curtiss Aviation School at Buffalo, Summer of 1916.
Varsity football squad, 1916.
Left College after Mid-years, February, 1917.
Enlisted in the Aviation Section of the Signal Corps at Key West, Fla., March 1, 1917.
Assigned to flying school at Miami, Fla.
Graduated in July and sent to first ground school at Massachusetts Institute of Technology.
Sailed overseas, July 23, 1917.
In Paris, assigned to special duty in organizing American schools of aviation, August and September.
Commissioned as First Lieutenant, September 29, 1917.
Assigned to 3rd American Instruction Centre (Issoudun) and became tester of planes at Field No. 7.
Assigned to American Detachment, "Aviation Française, Division Spad" at Chartres, June 7, 1918.
Detached from French Aviation and joined the 94th Aero Squadron, U. S. A., First Pursuit Group, at the front, June 16.
Region of Chateau Thierry, brought down his first enemy plane, a Rumpler, July 7.
A Bi-place Halberstadt, north of Souilly, October 2.
A Balloon, a Fokker, and a Bi-place L. V. G. in one hour, near Dun-sur-Meuse, October 3.
A Balloon near Grand Pré, October 5.
A Fokker, October 8.
A Balloon over Buzancy, October 13.
Promoted to a Captaincy, October 3.
Leading his Flight, he was killed in action near Grand Pré, brought down by a direct hit of a German anti-aircraft battery, October 27, 1918.

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Sunday, November 10, 1918

MY DEAR MR. COOLIDGE,

Though I have never met either of you, I want to tell you and Mrs. Coolidge how awfully sorry I am for you at this time. I was with Ham at Tech in the first ground school squadron and knew him fairly well. We crossed together and later shared hotel and pension experiences in Paris. Subsequently I saw him at odd times in Issoudun. No need to tell you what an altogether wonderful person we all thought him. He was so easily the star of our little crowd of ten from Tech — with his gorgeous wholesome body, his full round laugh, his vivid enthusiasm, his keen, sensitive enjoyment of mere living, his kindness and his purity.

Any attempt at consolation would be impertinent. I want you to know what he knew, however, that his part in the war was worth a thousand-fold the sacrifice he made. . . . Those months in France were packed with an essence of life, a quality of existence, worth centuries of living, though we realize it only in retrospect. The incalculably dear deaths which have come to some of them were the destiny of all of us — the most glorious that ever fell

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to youth — and in all sincerity, those of us who remain have missed our calling. They are merged in the greatest spiritual tradition the world has known since Christ, in the highest and most immortal of all adventures — and they accepted it with the finest freest gesture that was ever offered by youth.

I wish I could express what I feel about Ham. I can't. But believe me in this: — He is to be missed — how poignantly by you I know I cannot realize — but not regretted. He is above regret.

Faithfully yours,

WALKER M. ELLIS

Captain, Air Service