

John Patrick Coogan

Born, 1 June 1900. Died at Pittsburgh, 6 June 1973, Age 73

Prepared by John Francis Coogan

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John P. Coogan

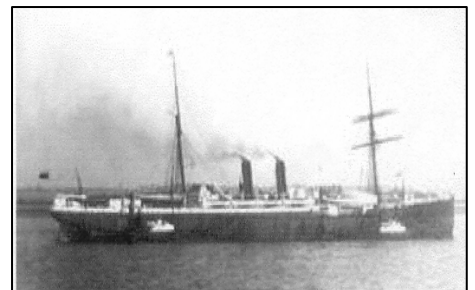
John Patrick Coogan was born June 1, 1900 Wishaw, County Lanark, Scotland. He was the first born of James F. Coogan and Margaret Callahan Coogan. His father left Scotland for the United States in 1903. John, his brother Frank, and his mother came to the United States on the steamship Furnessia, May 16 1904, landing at Ellis Island carrying \$18⁷³. They settled in Fayette City, PA., a coal-mining town on the east bank of the Monongahela River, 45 miles east of Pittsburgh.

John's mother did not want her sons to be coal miners so James left the mines and took a job at Westinghouse Electric Co. in East Pittsburgh, Pa. The family remained in Fayette City while the father boarded in Turtle Creek. Each payday John went by train to Turtle Creek, meet his father and bring the money to his mother.

The family later moved to Turtle Creek in about 1908 where John attended St. Colman's grade school and served as altar boy. At this time he met Fr. Henry Carlin, a newly ordained priest then assigned to St. Colman's. Their paths crossed again in 1937 when Fr. Carlin was made pastor at Holy Rosary Church in Homewood. He was quick to put John on the Church Committee.

In 1917, at the age of 17, John joined the U.S. Navy⁷⁴ and sent for basic training to Great Lakes, Illinois⁷⁵. He was later assigned to aviation gunners mate school where he attained the rank of third Class Aviation Gunners Mate. I remember him showing us a drawing of a Lewis machine gun used to arm Navy planes.

Discharged at the cessation of hostilities he worked with his father at the Pennsylvania Railroad locomotive repair shops in Pitcairn. Shortly thereafter, when the railroaders went on strike and he was not working he took training in drafting at a K of C evening school. Later he obtained a position as tracer at the Mesta Machine Co., Homestead. Now interested in the field of engineering Dad attended night school at Carnegie Tech to learn the fundamentals of drafting. Once qualified he was taken on as draftsman at the Edgar Thompson Steel Works, Braddock.



HMS Furnessia

⁷³ Ship Manifest, Immigration Record, Ellis Island # 1365432

⁷⁴ Cf. "John Coogan" **Coogan-Quinn Family Scrapbook (CQFS)** Vol. 2, p. 3

⁷⁵ Application for Insurance, Treasury Dept., Application for Insurance, Sept. 13, 1918., Cf. Scrapbook II, p.3a

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From there he went to the Kopper's Company, also in the capacity of draftsman but when the when the Depression hit in 1929 he was laid off.

John married Anna Gertrude Quinn on September 8, 1926⁷⁶. Their first apartment was in Greenfield, just outside Schenley Park. Jack, their first child was born October 12, 1927 and a second Billie on December 14, 1928. With a larger family, they moved to Washington Blvd. where a third son, Jimmy, son was born September 24, 1930.

The first recollections of my father go back to this house. I remember how on one winter night he bundled up Bill and me and took us for a sled ride down to Silver Lake. When we returned mother had hot cocoa ready to take out the chill.

During the Depression, John got some drafting work from Mayer Truck Body plant in East Liberty, Larimer Ave. I remember visiting the place one summer evening and being shown the drafting table and some truck drawings.

John eventually worked as a laborer with the City Water Department. One job assigned was work on a water main near Highland Park and so nearby that he walked to and from the job. I can still see him coming home in the evening, down over the hill from Lincoln Ave. behind our house on the boulevard. At another time, he worked on a water line on Bennett St. just above Homewood Ave. On that day, we were able to take him his lunch.

About 1932 he was hired by Bauer Baking Co. as retail sales representative with his first route near St. Agnes church in Oakland. On this job, he drove a horse and wagon. The bakery was located on Tioga St. but the horses were stabled on Braddock Ave. just east of the Pennsylvania RR tracks. Part of the salesperson's job was to walk to the stable in the morning, walk the horse down to the bakery and hitch it to the wagon. In the evening, the horse had to be taken back to the stable. It was not long before he got a new route in West View where he was fortunate to be able to use a truck instead of a horse and wagon. We did not see too much of our father when he worked for the bakery as he was away early in the morning before we got up and we were bedded down by the time when he returned I the evening.

The family moved from Washington Blvd. to Hermitage St. in 1933 most likely, because it was closer to the schools the kids would attend. However, the house did not heat well so we moved once more in 1935 to 1205 Murtland Ave.

In 1935 Dad got a job as draftsman for J&L Steel Co. and the family fortunes took a turn for the better in 1937 when was taken on again as draftsman again at Edgar Thompson Steel where he remained until transferred to the Homestead Works in 1942.

The fourth and youngest child, Gertrude Anne, was born March 7, 1937. In April of that year, the family moved to Gerritt St., the home of William Quinn, John's father-in law.

⁷⁶ Ibid. p. 4

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It was probably not our family's choice to move but there was a need for someone to look after Poppa Quinn who was then about 70 years of age. Daddy was probably not too happy paying \$50 monthly rent instead of having a place of his own, but in fact, I think he got a bargain and Pop had some spending money to boot.

John became active in the American Legion in the mid-1930s.⁷⁷ It was his conviction that should there be another Depression he was going to know some of the politicians and have contacts that would enable him to get a better job than digging ditches. He was convinced that the veterans group had clout with the politicians. In time, he was elected Commander of Homewood Post 351 and later served as 32nd District Commander. Dad was very active in State and County offices with the Legion and loved to attend their national conventions in New York, Boston, Chicago and Philadelphia. Most of the state conventions saw him present from 1940 to 1953. I remember riding around with him when he was Post Service Officer, visiting veterans who needed health care or financial assistance. He frequently visited those who were at the Aspinwall Veterans Hospital.



Post 351, Philly Convention 1950s

Once the family moved from Homewood, Dad began to pull away from Legion activities. In the late 1930s, he also became active in the Ancient Order of Hibernians where for several years he was recording secretary. He and Mom used to write out by hand the envelopes for monthly meeting notices. We all became proficient at folding letters and stuffing envelopes. One year he was chairman of the amusement ticket sales for the Irish Day picnic at Kennywood Park. We had a bonanza of free amusement rides.

⁷⁷ Ibid. p.6

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In addition to being on the Holy Rosary Parish Church Committee, he was head usher at the eleven o'clock mass, the most crowded on the Sunday schedule. He always invited the other men who ushered at this mass to the house for a drink on the Sunday between Christmas and New Years.

In 1942, John was transferred from Edgar Thompson Works to Homestead Works where he remained until 1953 when he was to the Duquesne Works. He remained there until November of 1963 when U.S. Steel gave him an early retirement. This lasted for about two weeks when Swindell Dressler Engineering took him on. John concluded his working career with short stints at All States Engineering Co. and finally at McKee Co.

In 1956, after the death of William Quinn, the house on Gerritt St. was sold. John and Gertrude bought a home in Whitehall, where he lived until his death in 1973. This ownership gave him a great sense of pride and accomplishment. He said that finally after 40 years of marriage he had a place of his own so he told Mom to buy new dining and living room furniture for it. Whitehall was a good location since me and Bill's families were located in the area so he could visit with his grandchildren.

Dad was active in the St. Elizabeth's Senior Citizens club until his final illness and death in the spring of 1973. John P. Coogan lies at Calvary Cemetery, Section MA, Lot 81, and Grave #16.