

The First U.S. Navy "Aircraft Carriers" 1910-1911



Eugene Ely airborne after takeoff from USS Pennsylvania in San Francisco Bay on 18 January 1911.



USS Birmingham Scout Cruiser #2 anchored in Hampton Roads Eugene Ely. Note the ramp across



USS Birmingham Scout Cruiser #2 Eugene Ely taking off 11 October 1910.

Eugene Ely

The first U.S. Navy ships used to launch aircraft were modified Cruisers with wooden ramps. In November 1910, a Curtiss Hudson Flyer was loaded aboard USS Birmingham Scout Cruiser #2. On 14 November 1910, while Birmingham was anchored in Hampton Roads, the airplane was flown from the ship by aviator Eugene B. Ely. After takeoff, he flew the plane for two miles before landing on Willoughby Spit in Norfolk.

The first landing and takeoff of an airplane on a Navy ship occurred on 18 January 1911 in San Francisco Bay. Eugene Ely, flying a Curtiss Pusher, landed and later took-off from USS Pennsylvania Armored Cruiser #4. He demonstrated the concept that a ship could launch and recover aircraft. Eugene Ely was killed on 19 October 1911 when the airplane he was flying crashed near Macon, Georgia.

<http://www.history.navy.mil/photos/events/ev-1910s/ev-1911/ely-pa.htm>