



Smithsonian
National Air and Space Museum

New York Airways Collection

Melissa A. N. Keiser

2020

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Collection Overview

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| Repository: | National Air and Space Museum Archives |
| Title: | New York Airways Collection |
| Identifier: | NASM.1992.0052 |
| Date: | 1929-1971 (bulk 1952-1969) |
| Extent: | 7.63 Cubic feet (7 records center boxes) |
| Creator: | Wheatland, Richard, II, 1923-2009 |
| Language: | English . |
| Summary: | Collection consists of materials created by and collected by Richard Wheatland II during the period when he served as a Vice President of New York Airways (1953-1968), a helicopter airline operating in the New York City metropolitan area from 1952-1977. |
| Digital Content: | Image(s): New York Airways |

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Richard Wheatland II, Gift, 1973, 1992, NASM.1992.0052

Processing Information

Arranged by donor; Series 1 (1992 Acquisition) described by Liz Dawson, 1992; Series 2 (1973 Acquisition) described by Melissa A. N. Keiser, 2020; encoded by Melissa A. N. Keiser, 2020.

Preferred Citation

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Restrictions

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Biographical / Historical

Incorporated on August 31, 1949, New York Airways (NYA), one of the first three helicopter carriers certificated by the United States Civil Aeronautics Board (CAB), began mail service between New York City's three major airports on October 15, 1952, and on July 8, 1953, inaugurated the world's first regularly scheduled passenger helicopter service. As was the case with all of the helicopter carriers, NYA depended heavily on government subsidies for its economic health, but worked steadily towards its goal of financial self-sufficiency, extending its routes into nearby Connecticut and New Jersey, carrying freight, and doing charter work. In October 1955, NYA signed joint fare agreements with many national and international airlines, promoting their service by making it easier for passengers transferring to and from the major New York City airports to go "all the way by air." As ground traffic in the New York metropolitan area became increasingly congested, NYA, based at LaGuardia Airport, worked closely with the Port of New York Authority (PONYA) to establish heliports on the island of Manhattan, inaugurating service into the West 30th Street Heliport in 1956 and the Wall Street Heliport (at Pier 6 on the East River) in 1960. In December 1956, as part of a campaign to break the color barrier in the airline industry, NYA hired pilot Perry H. Young, Jr.; Young made his first regularly scheduled flight for NYA as a co-pilot on February 5, 1957, becoming the the first Black pilot for a commercial airline in the United States.

High operating costs continued to be an issue for all of the helicopter carriers, and in 1958, after continuing criticism from the CAB on the subject of alleged excessive costs and increasing subsidy need, NYA was forced to suspend some services. In 1961 Congress put a ceiling on helicopter carrier subsidy payments. The 1964-1965 New York World's Fair provided NYA the opportunity to add passenger and sightseeing service to and from the rooftop heliport of the Port of New York Authority Building at the Fair. Ever seeking a way to reduce its need for government subsidies (which were eventually withdrawn), in June 1965 NYA entered into operating support agreements with Trans World Airlines (TWA) and Pan American World Airways, whose passengers were some of NYA's biggest customers. NYA is perhaps most famous for its regularly scheduled passenger service from the rooftop heliport atop the Pan Am Building, inaugurated on December 21, 1965. Though undeniably glamorous, the noisy NYA helicopters were not appreciated by many of their midtown Manhattan neighbors. Service to the Pan Am Building heliport was cancelled on February 18, 1968, due to inadequate passenger loads, then was briefly resumed in early 1977 until a fatal accident on May 16, 1977, ended NYA service from the heliport. Already suffering from financial setbacks and rising fuel prices, NYA ceased operations permanently following a fatal accident at Newark International Airport on April 18, 1979, and filed for bankruptcy the following month in May 1979.

Richard Wheatland II, born in Boston, Massachusetts, in 1923, served in the United States Navy from 1943-1946 as a deck officer on a destroyer-minelayer in the Pacific; after his discharge he did one year of graduate work in government at Harvard University and then attended Columbia Law School, receiving his law degree in 1949. From 1950 to 1952, Wheatland was based in Paris, France, employed by the US Government in a division of the Office of the Special Representative in Europe for the Marshall Plan. Wheatland returned to New York to join New York Airways in January 1953 as the Manager of the airline's Traffic and Sales Department, and soon became NYA's Vice President of Sales and Service. He was married in 1954 to Cynthia McAdoo. Wheatland left the company in 1968 to take a position in his native home of Boston, and died peacefully at his home on June 26, 2009.

NOTE: The airline covered by this collection, New York Airways (1951), should not be confused with an earlier New York Airways (1927) which was founded July 8, 1927, operated as a subsidiary of Pan American Airways, and was sold to Eastern Air Transport on July 15, 1931. It should also not be confused with the unrelated but similarly named New York Air (owned by Frank Lorenzo's Texas Air Corporation) which was founded in late 1980 and ceased operations on February 1, 1987, when it merged with Continental Airlines.

Scope and Contents

The collection includes a variety of material, probably collected by Richard Wheatland II (1923-2009) during the period 1953-1968 when he served as a Vice President of New York Airways (NYA). The material reflects the administration of the airline and many of the activities of its president, Robert L. Cummings, Jr., as well as its dealings with organizations such as the Air Transport Association (ATA), American Helicopter Society, Bell Helicopter, Eastern Air Lines, the Grand Central Building, the International Air Transport Association (IATA), Pan America World Airways (Pan Am), the Port of New York Authority (PONYA), Sikorsky, Trans World Airlines (TWA), other organizations interested in helicopter operations, and the federal government. In addition to administrative correspondence, memoranda, proposals, employee operations manuals, speeches, and reports, there are also a large number of manuscripts and publications, clippings, timetables and other ephemera, and a small number of photographs.

New York Airways' fleet included several helicopter models over the airline's lifetime, including the Sikorsky S-55, Sikorsky S-58, Bell 47H (used for charter work), Vertol V-44 (civil version of the Piasecki H-21 Workhorse), Boeing-Vertol Model 107, and Sikorsky S-61L and S-61N models. The collection contains materials relating to these aircraft and helicopter operations in general as well as other vertical flight and short take off and landing (STOL) aircraft including the Cierva CR Twin (CR LTH.1, Grasshopper III), Hughes H-500, Hiller FH-1100, Bell 206 JetRanger, and Fairchild (Pilatus) Porter (Heli-Porter, Turbo-Porter).

In addition to the material directly relating to NYA, the collection includes material on topics of interest to the NYA executives. This includes information on the other two helicopter carriers, Los Angeles Airways (LAA) and Helicopter Air Services (HAS) of Chicago, as well as the later San Francisco & Oakland Helicopter Airlines (SFO), and other international, national, and local airlines. Also included are a large number of materials directly relating to air transportation and urban planning issues in the New York City metropolitan area (including northern New Jersey), particularly those related to the airports NYA served: Newark International Airport (IATA airport code EWR) and Teterboro Airport (TEB) in New Jersey, LaGuardia Airport (LGA), West 30th Street Heliport (JRA), Downtown Manhattan/Wall Street Heliport (JRB), Pan Am Building Heliport (JPB), and New York International Airport, Anderson Field, commonly known as "Idlewild" (IDL). New York International Airport was renamed as John F. Kennedy International Airport (JFK) on December 24, 1963.

Series 2I (1973 Acquisition) contains more of Wheatland's personal notes on various topics, and also includes materials on topics of general business executive interest such as public speaking and management techniques.

Arrangement

Contents are in original order as received by NASM Archives. Folders in both series are arranged (roughly) in alphabetical by original folder title. Materials within the folders in Series 2 (1973 Acquisition) tend to appear in reverse chronological order. Multiple copies of the same materials may appear in different folders.

Digital images of materials in this collection were repurposed from scans made by an outside contractor for a commercial product and may show irregular cropping, orientation, and color variations. Some materials may not be visible online due to copyright restrictions.

Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

- Aeronautics
- Aeronautics, Commercial
- Aeronautics, Commercial -- United States
- Air mail service
- Airports
- Airports -- New York
- Helicopter transportation
- Helicopters
- Periodicals

Types of Materials:

- Clippings
- Correspondence
- Ephemera -- 1940-1970
- Financial records
- Manuscripts
- Photographs
- Publications
- Reports
- Timetables

Names:

- Air Transport Association of America
- American Helicopter Society
- Bell Helicopter Company
- Civil Aeronautics Board
- Civil Aeronautics Board
- Eastern Airlines, Inc.
- International Air Transport Association
- Los Angeles Airways
- New York Airways
- Pan American World Airways, Inc.
- Port of New York Authority
- Sikorsky (Aircraft manufacturer)
- Trans World Airlines

Container Listing

Series 1: 1992 Acquisition

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| Box 1, Folder 6 | Air Transport Association of America (ATA), Speech, Stuart G. Tipton, "How Safe Is Flying?", June 12, 1964 Image(s): Air Transport Association of America (ATA), Reports, "How Safe Is Flying?" |
| Box 1, Folder 7 | Air Transport Association of America (ATA), Reports, "Regulation by Law of Aircraft Noise Levels from the Viewpoint of United States Airlines", November 1966 Image(s): Air Transport Association of America (ATA), Reports, "Regulation by Law of Aircraft Noise Levels" |
| Box 1, Folder 8 | Air Transport Association of America (ATA), Reports, "Statement of John E. Stephen on Aircraft Noise Abatement", November 15, 1967 Image(s): Air Transport Assoc of America, Reports, "Statement of John E. Stephen on Aircraft Noise Abatement" |
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- Box 1, Folder 14 Civil Aeronautics Board, Accounting, Statistics, 1953-1963
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- Box 1, Folder 22 Grand Central Building, Inc. [Pan Am Building] Heliport Agreement, 1962
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- Box 1, Folder 23 International Air Transport Association (IATA), Helicopter Subcommittee Meeting [Report, New York Airways, Inc. Fleet Development, 1953-1965], 1957
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- Box 1, Folder 24 International Air Transport Association (IATA), Information Circulars, 1956-1961

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- Box 1, Folder 25 International Air Transport Association (IATA), Resolutions, 1963-1964
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- Box 1, Folder 26 Manuscripts, "The Airport Situation: Some New approaches to a Growing National Problem," Stuart G. Tipton (ATA), 1967
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- Box 1, Folder 27 Manuscripts, "Helicopters, A Developmental Program" (Speech) Robert L. Cummings, Jr., 1954
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- Box 1, Folder 28 Manuscripts, "The History of New York Airways", A. C. Woodruff (Dartmouth College), undated, circa 1955-1956
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- Box 1, Folder 29 Manuscripts, "A Navigation System for Helicopters" (Speech), J. E. Gallagher, 1955
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- Box 1, Folder 31 Manuscripts, "New York; Survival or Decay" (Speech) Robert L. Cummings, Jr., October 27, 1966
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- Box 1, Folder 32 Manuscripts, "Operational Economics of Scheduled Helicopter Transportation," Robert L. Cummings, Jr., 1954
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- Box 1, Folder 33 Manuscripts, "STOL Operations in the City Center," Oscar Bakke (FAA), 1966
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- Box 1, Folder 35 Manuscripts, "A United States Supersonic Transport" (Speech) C. R. Smith (American Airlines), October 22, 1963
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- Box 3, Folder 7 Proposals, Shorts S.C.7 Turbo Skyvan [Brochure], 1964
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- Box 3, Folder 8 Publications, *Aviation Week and Space Technology*, 1965-1966
- Box 3, Folder 8 *Aviation Week and Space Technology*, Vol. 82, No. 12, March 22, 1965
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- Box 3, Folder 8 C. M. Plattner, "Airmobile Concept Proves Effectiveness in Guerilla Fight,"
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- Box 3, Folder 9 Publications, *Air Transport World*, Vol. 3, No. 5, May 1966
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- Box 3, Folder 10 Publications, Brochures (1 of 2), 1958-1967
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- Box 3, Folder 11 New York Airways [Timetable], "New York Airways, Summer Schedule effective April 24, 1966: The Skyline Route", April 24, 1966
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- Box 3, Folder 11 New York Airways, "For Your Information - Some Facts About New York Airways Scheduled Day and Night Helicopter Service" [2 copies], circa 1954-1955
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- Box 6, Folder 64 Brochure, "Metropolitan New York's Billion Dollar Business," Aviation Development Council (Flushing, New York), June 1967., June 1967
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- Box 6, Folder 65 Correspondence, Trans World Airlines (TWA) Proposal, October 1967
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- Box 6, Folder 66 Conference, Airports for the Future, London (UK), April 11-12, 1967, November 1966 - May 1967
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Wheatland is tasked at short notice to attend the conference in Richard Cumming's place, and deliver a paper on Helicopters.
- Box 6, Folder 66 Program, British Airports Authority Dinner, Airports for the Future Conference, St. Ermin's Hotel, London, April 12, 1967
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- Box 7, Folder 6 Documents, New York Airways, Night Numbers and Addresses [Employee Contact List], undated
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- Box 7, Folder 7 Notes, Richard Wheatland (RW) Conference [NYA Personnel], March 9, 1960
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- Box 7, Folder 8 Documents, New York Airways, Personnel, Robert H. Miller, Jr., March 1961 - June 1962
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- Box 7, Folder 9 Documents, Airline Executive Pay Scales, 1959-1960
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- Box 7, Folder 10 Documents, Addresses
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- Box 7, Folder 10 New York Airways, Employee Contact List, November 9, 1959

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| Box 7, Folder 10 | Useful Addresses in Paris (France) and London (UK) Image(s) |
| Box 7, Folder 10 | TWA and PAA District Sales Managers, Europe Image(s) |
| Box 7, Folder 11 | Documents, Courses and Schools and Books, 1957-1964 Image(s) Direct mail marketing ephemera from publishers (books and periodicals), universities (courses and degree programs) and professional organizations for business administration topics (management, marketing, sales, executive personal development), air transportation topics, writing and public speaking. |
| Box 7, Folder 12 | Documents, Civil Aeronautics Board (CAB), New York Airways Helicopter Experiment Military Benefit, March 15, 1957 Image(s) |
| Box 7, Folder 13 | Documents, Civil Aeronautics Board (CAB), Orders, New York Airways (Operating Certificate), 1952-1954 Image(s) |
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| Box 7, Folder 16 | Documents, New York Airways, External Load Charters to Date, May 13, 1965 Image(s) |
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- Box 7, Folder 30 Documents, Press Contact Address Lists
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- Box 7, Folder 31 Prospectus, New York Airways Capital Stock, January 1953
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- Box 7, Folder 32 Documents, Questionnaires, 1963-1966

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- Box 7, Folder 33 Notes, Straight Rate Prorate Definition and Example, undated
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- Box 7, Folder 37 New York Airways, Special Flight Coupon, Inauguration of Service, Pan Am Building Heliport, December 21, 1965
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- Box 7, Folder 37 Speech notes (index card stack), Richard Wheatland
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- Box 7, Folder 37 Brochure, "107-II Airliner," Boeing Helicopters, Vertol Division, circa 1965
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- Box 7, Folder 37 Envelopes [empty], "First Passenger Flight Between Pan Am Building and J. F. Kennedy international Airport", 1965
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- Box 7, Folder 37 New York Airways [Timetable], "New York Airways, Winter Schedule effective December 21, 1965: The Skyline Route", December 21, 1965
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- Box 7, Folder 38 Documents, New York Airways, Confidential Memos, "Aug. 2", July-August 1965
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Undated New York Airways (NYA) memo [contextually dated to August 2, 1965] and related documents outlining specific actions to take advantage of new operating agreements with Pan American World Airways (Pan Am) and Trans World Airlines (TWA) as a means to reduce NYA's operating costs and increase revenues. Folder also contains documents (July 1965) concerning issues with NYA external load charter flights.

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- Box 7, Folder 40 Notes, Operating Costs "R L C May 1965" [Robert L. Cummings, Jr.], May 1965
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- Box 7, Folder 41 Notes, Richard Wheatland Speech to American Society of Civil Engineers (Aerospace Transport Group), October 27, 1965 [1 of 2], October 1965
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- Box 7, Folder 50 Documents, Inauguration of New York Airways Service from the Pan Am Building Heliport, November 19, 1965 to January 7, 1966
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- Box 7, Folder 51 "Second Draft" of unknown speech (41 pages)
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- Box 7, Folder 51 Letter, Robert L. Cummings, Jr. (New York Airways) to Juan Trippe (Pan Am), suggesting NYA operation of helipad to be built on roof of Pan Am Building, September 28, 1960
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