



Smithsonian

National Air and Space Museum

Waterman (W. D.) 1932 B
Whatsit (X12272) Drawings

Jessamyn Lloyd

2015

National Air and Space Museum Archives
14390 Air & Space Museum Parkway
Chantilly, VA 20151
NASMRefDesk@si.edu
<https://airandspace.si.edu/archives>

Table of Contents

Collection Overview	1
Administrative Information	1
Biographical / Historical.....	1
Scope and Contents.....	2
Arrangement.....	2
Names and Subjects	2
Container Listing	

Collection Overview

Repository:	National Air and Space Museum Archives
Title:	Waterman (W. D.) 1932 B Whatsit (X12272) Drawings
Date:	Circa 1964-1965
Identifier:	NASM.2016.0004
Creator:	Matt, Paul R.
Extent:	0.06 Cubic feet (1 map folder)
Language:	English .
Summary:	The Waterman (W. D.) 1932 B Whatsit (X12272) was a tailless airplane designed by Waldo Waterman to be as easy for the average person to fly as it was to drive an automobile. Paul R. Matt was a draftsman and acquaintance of Waldo Waterman who contacted the National Air Museum in 1964 and offered to produce drawings of the Waterman (W. D.) 1932 B Whatsit (X12272) and Waterman (Arrowplane) Arrowbile Prototype (X262Y) with Waterman's input and approval. This collection consists of two three-view drawings of the Waterman (W. D.) 1932 B Whatsit (X12272) by Paul R. Matt.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Tim Williams, Gift, 2015, NASM.2016.0004

Processing Information

Arranged and described (2015) and encoded (2020) by Jessamyn Lloyd.

Preferred Citation

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Restrictions

No restrictions on access

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Biographical / Historical

The Waterman (W. D.) 1932 B Whatsit (X12272) was a tailless airplane designed by Waldo Waterman to be as easy for the average person to fly as it was to drive an automobile. The Whatsit was first flown in

July 1932 and early flights showed problems with pitch stability and landing accidents so Waterman set the project aside. In 1933, Eugene Vidal, Chief of the US Bureau of Air Commerce, issued a challenge to US aircraft manufacturers to design and build a safe and inexpensive airplane for the average person. Waterman reviewed the specifications in the challenge and realized they closely followed his work on the Whatsit. Waterman made improvements and redesigned the aircraft and the result was the Waterman (Arrowplane) Arrowbile Prototype (X262Y), which was delivered to the Bureau of Air Commerce in July 1935. The Arrowbile was one of two winners of the challenge. The Whatsit (X12272) was a player in the development of the tailless flying wing concept and was a major contributor in the reestablishment of the steerable nose wheel for the tricycle landing gear utilized in many modern airplane designs. Following its useful test life, the Whatsit was stored by Waterman in anticipation of donating the aircraft to the Smithsonian, where it arrived at the National Air Museum in 1950. Paul R. Matt was a draftsman and acquaintance of Waldo Waterman who contacted the National Air Museum in 1964 and offered to produce drawings of the Waterman (W. D.) 1932 B Whatsit (X12272) and Waterman (Arrowplane) Arrowbile Prototype (X262Y) with Waterman's input and approval. Terms were agreed upon and the final drawings were delivered to the Museum in April 1965.

Scope and Contents

This collection consists of two three-view drawings of the Waterman (W. D.) 1932 B Whatsit (X12272) by Paul R. Matt. Both are on vellum and are made with pencil and blue pencil or ink. One measures 36 x 24 inches and the other measures 36 x 22 inches. The larger of the two has one view that was drawn on a separate piece of vellum and then adhered to the drawing; that separate piece is now detached and both it and the area where it was previously attached have yellowed. Each of these items represents a different draft of a final drawing of the aircraft by Mr. Matt, which is also in the National Air and Space Museum Archives' collection.

Arrangement

Collection is in original order.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Aeronautics
Airplanes

Types of Materials:

Technical drawings