



# Smithsonian

*National Air and Space Museum*

## Orville and Wilbur Wright Memorabilia Collection

2002

National Air and Space Museum Archives  
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<https://airandspace.si.edu/archives>

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## Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	National Air and Space Museum Archives
<b>Title:</b>	Orville and Wilbur Wright Memorabilia Collection
<b>Identifier:</b>	NASM.XXXX.0079
<b>Date:</b>	1906-1948 (bulk 1907-1928)
<b>Extent:</b>	0.5 Cubic feet ((1 box))
<b>Language:</b>	English .

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## Administrative Information

### Acquisition Information

Various Donors, Gift, unknown, XXXX-0079, unknown

### Restrictions

No restrictions on access

### Conditions Governing Use

Material is subject to Smithsonian Terms of Use. Should you wish to use NASM material in any medium, please submit an Application for Permission to Reproduce NASM Material, available at [Permissions Requests](#)

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## Biographical / Historical

Wilbur Wright was born April 16, 1867, his brother Orville Wright on August 19, 1871. They, along with sister Katharine and brothers Reuchlin and Lorin, were raised near Millville, Indiana and in Dayton, Ohio by their mother, Susan Wright, and father, Milton Wright, bishop of the United Brethren Church. As young men, Wilbur and Orville launched a printing business and a bicycle shop. An interest in aeronautics, spurred by the accounts of the experiments of Otto Lilienthal, prompted Wilbur to request information on the subject from the Smithsonian Institution in 1899. In August of 1900, Wilbur built his first glider and that year and the next the brothers tested gliders at Kitty Hawk. The Wrights constructed a wind tunnel to gather accurate aeronautical data and, benefiting from this new information, another glider was built in 1902. In 1903, the brothers were ready to began construction of a powered craft. With the assistance of mechanic Charles Taylor, they added a 4-cylinder, 12-horsepower engine and propellers to the 1903 Flyer and it was sent to Kitty Hawk for testing. At 10:35 am, December 17, on Kill Devil Hill, Orville achieved a flight of 12 seconds--traveling a distance of 120 feet. By 1908 the Wrights were demonstrating their machines in Europe. The U.S. Army Signal Corps advertised for bids for a two-seat observation aircraft and in 1908 and 1909, the Wrights flew at official Army trials at Fort Myer, Virginia. (It was here that powered flight's first fatality occurred: the tragic death of Lieutenant Thomas Selfridge.) The Army was to purchase the Military Flyer (Signal Corps No. 1) for {dollar}30,000 in 1909. In that same year, The Wright Company was established to manufacture Wright aircraft. Wilbur died in Dayton, Ohio on May 30, 1912. Orville Wright would live until January 30, 1948.

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## Scope and Contents

The collection contains letters, telegrams, brochures, photographs and miscellaneous ephemera pertaining to Orville and Wilbur Wright. Included with the correspondence are letters written to William J. Hammer, who was an aeronautical pioneer and associated with the Wright Brothers, as well as other individuals including C. R. Peterkin. Additional items are, brochures from the Wilbur Wright Memorial, a brochure of the 25th Anniversary celebration of the first successful airplane flight, December 17, 1928, a sketch on an envelope by Wilbur Wright of a flight around the Statue of Liberty in 1909, a sympathy acknowledgment card for the Wrights' for Wilbur's death, and a photograph signed by Orville Wright. Also enclosed with the collection is a piece of wood from the Wright Brothers hangar at Kitty Hawk, presented by Orville Wright.

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## General

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## Names and Subject Terms

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

### Subjects:

- Aeronautics
- Aeronautics -- 1903-1916
- Aeronautics -- Awards
- Aeronautics -- Records
- Works of art

### Types of Materials:

- Brochures
- Correspondence
- Ephemera
- Photographs

### Names:

- Hammer, William J. (William Joseph), 1858-1934 (electrical engineer)
- Peterkin, C. R.
- Wright, Orville, 1871-1948
- Wright, Wilbur, 1867-1912